

November 2014



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- [Vote in Your FSA County Committee Election](#)
- [USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadlines](#)
- [ARC/PLC Informational Meetings and Decision-Making Begin](#)
- [USDA Expands Access to Credit to Help More Beginning and Family Farmers](#)
- [Important Dates and Deadlines](#)

Washington FSA Updates

Washington Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/xx

State Committee:

Don Olmstead, Jr., Chair
Larry DeHaan, Member
Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison, Member
Steve Hair, Member
Jesus Limon, Member

Executive Director:

Judy Olson

Chief Admin. Officer:

Mike Mandere

Division Chiefs:

Rod Hamilton, Programs
Mike Mykines, Loans

Vote in Your FSA County Committee Election

USDA encourages farmers and ranchers to make your voices heard by voting in the upcoming Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee elections. You will begin receiving ballots in the mail in early November. Return ballots to your local FSA office by the **Dec. 1, 2014**, deadline to ensure that your vote is counted.

FSA county committee members provide an important link between the local agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity support programs; conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs and eligibility. County committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters who do not receive ballots in the coming week may pick one up at your local USDA Service Center or [FSA office](#). Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 1,

Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

2014.
A list of candidates for FSA elections in Washington state may be found [online](#). Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2015.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2014 fact sheet and brochures, can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://go.usa.gov/pYV3> to find an FSA office near you.

USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadlines

USDA is extending the deadlines for the 2014 and 2015 dairy Margin Protection Program. Farmers now have until **Dec. 5, 2014** to enroll in the voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The program provides financial assistance to participating farmers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

Producers are encouraged to use the online resource at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool to calculate the best levels of coverage for your dairy operation. The secure website can be accessed via computer, smartphone or tablet.

USDA also extended the opportunity for public comments on both the Margin Protection Program and the Dairy Product Donation Program until Dec. 15, 2014.

Comments can be submitted to USDA via the regulations.gov website at <http://go.usa.gov/GJSA>.

ARC/PLC Informational Meetings and Decision-Making Begin

The ARC/PLC election period begins **November 17, 2014 and continues through March 31, 2015**. Owners and operators are encouraged to take their time and learn as much about the programs as possible before making your decisions. County FSA staff are conducting informational meetings throughout the state. Dates and locations of meetings are posted on the Washington FSA [website](#) at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=wa&area=home&subject=stev&topic=landing>

Additionally, FSA and WSU Extension will arrange informational meetings to explain the online tools to assist with ARC/PLC decision-making. These meetings will be posted on the FSA [website](#) when the dates and locations become available. Also, FSA and Extension will make ARC/PLC presentations and will explain the online decision-making tools during the Tri-State Grain Growers convention in Stevenson, WA on Dec. 14, 2014.

Before electing in which program to participate, farm owners have a **one-time** opportunity to reallocate a farm's base acres and/or update counter-cyclical (CC) yields. These decisions must be

made by **February 27, 2015**. Owners may choose to retain base acres in effect on September 30, 2013 **or** to reallocate bases in the same proportion to the 4-year average of acres that were planted to covered commodities on the farm during the crop years 2009 thru 2012. Yield updates may be done on a crop by crop basis. Yields will be based on 90 percent of a farm's 2008 through 2012 average per acre yield. One owner signs the Base Acre Reallocation and Yield Update form, certifying that all owners agree to the decision. This person must be a current owner of the farm at the time the form is signed. After February 27 this will become an irrevocable decision through 2018 and possibly beyond, so it is critical that all owners agree on the decision before one signs.

After owners have made base and yield decisions, all producers with a share of production on a farm will make the program election for the 2014 through 2018 crop years. Producers may choose PLC or ARC County (ARC-CO) on a covered commodity-by-commodity basis, or they may choose ARC Individual (ARC-IC) for all covered commodities on a farm. Failure of producers on a farm to agree to an election will result in a default election to PLC and the elimination of any 2014 payments.

Persons granted power of attorney may sign ARC-PLC documents, including base reallocation and yield updates, program elections, and enrollment contracts. FSA-211, Power of Attorney forms that were on file prior to the 2014 Farm Bill will be valid if the boxes for "All current and all future programs" and "All actions" are checked.

Provisions for planting flexibility allow for planting of fruits, vegetables (FAV) and wild rice (WR) without violations. However, acre for acre payment reductions will apply to FAV or WR planted on payment acres.

More information on the ARC-PLC programs, including base reallocation and yield update tools, may be found at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=arpl&topic=landing>.

Producer webtools for estimating ARC and PLC benefits are also available at this site. These tools were developed by the University of Illinois and Texas A&M in conjunction with FSA.

USDA Expands Access to Credit to Help More Beginning and Family Farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced improvements to farm loan programs by expanding eligibility and increasing lending limits to help more beginning and family farmers. As part of this effort, the Farm Service Agency is raising the borrowing limit for the microloan program from \$35,000 to \$50,000 and is simplifying the lending process. Also, FSA is updating required farming experience to include other valuable experiences and expanding eligible business entities to reflect changes in the way family farms are owned and operated. The changes become effective Nov. 7, 2014.

In addition to farm related experience, other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm loan eligibility such as operation or management of a non-farm business; leadership positions while serving in the military; or advanced education in an agricultural field. Also, individuals who own farmland under a different legal entity operating the farm now may be eligible for loans administered by FSA. Producers will have an opportunity to share suggestions on the microloan process, and the definitions of farming experience and business structures through Dec. 8, 2014, the public open comment period.

FSA is also publishing a Federal Register notice to solicit ideas from the public for pilot projects to help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of farm loan programs. Comments and ideas

regarding potential pilot projects will be accepted through Nov. 7, 2014.

Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#). For more information on farm loans, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local Farm Service Agency office.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- November 17, 2014 ARC/PLC program selection begins.
- November 20, 2014 deadline to apply for 2015 crop year Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) coverage of asparagus, berries, grapes, honey, hops, tree fruits and nuts.
- December 1, 2014 deadline to return County Committee election ballots.
- December 5, 2015 deadline for MPP-Dairy program.
- December 15, 2014 deadline to report crop acreage. (for fall planted crops - fall alfalfa seed, fall canola, fall mint, onions)

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